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# LETTERS

BY

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MAJOR NORMAN PRINGLE,

LATE OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> ROYAL SCOTS FUSILEERS,

VINDICATING

THE CHARACTER OF THE BRITISH ARMY,

EMPLOYED IN NORTH AMERICA IN THE YEARS 1814-15,

FROM ASPERSIONS CAST UPON IT

IN

STUART'S

"THREE YEARS IN NORTH AMERICA."

PRINTED FOR GRATUITOUS DISTRIBUTION,

AND MAY BE HAD OF

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, GEORGE STREET, EDINBURGH.

G. S. C.

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## LETTERS, &c.

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### LETTER I.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EDINBURGH EVENING COURANT.

*Edinburgh, 29th October, 1833.*

SIR,—Having within these few days read Mr Stuart's work on America, I was particularly struck with the manner in which the conduct of the British troops, serving under General Ross at the attack on Washington, is described. In vol. ii. p. 85, after commenting upon the merits of the expedition, and lamenting the destruction of the Capitol, War Office, and the *great bridge across the Potomac*, Mr Stuart proceeds to say, pp. 86, 87, that the library, and a great part of the state papers, were destroyed. I shall here quote the author's own words:—"I heard many anecdotes of this much-to-be-regretted incursion. The commanders had directed private property to be respected, but it was impossible to *restrain the soldiery*. Much private property was destroyed. Mr Elliot was with the army; his house was sacked. The destruction of Mr Gales' printing establishment was the most pitiful of all the proceedings." Now, sir, I am desirous of putting the public in possession of a few facts, which, I trust, will be the means of rescuing the character of the *British soldiery* from the imputation cast upon it. Subsequent to the defeat of the Americans at Bladensburg, General Ross advanced towards Washington with 1000 men, and about eight o'clock in the evening arrived at an open piece of ground *two miles* from the Federal city. Soon after our arrival, I was informed by the adjutant of the regiment that General Ross wished to see me immediately. On coming to the General, I was informed by him that he had ordered the grenadier company of the 21st regiment to parade for a particular service, and that I was to command them, and about 39 men more, making in all 100 rank and file. The General stated to me that he was about to advance into Washington, accompanied by this body of men only, who were to act as his advanced guard in approaching the city. That, on my arrival, I was to take up a position with my men, to place sentries at the different entrances into the city, to send patrols round every half hour, to *prevent any soldier or seaman belonging to the expedition from entering the city*, and on no account whatever to permit *my men to go into any house*. These orders were most punctually attended to. I went round with every patrol myself, I paraded my men every hour to see that none were absent, and for *twelve hours* held possession of the capital of the United States, with that handful of British soldiers, and *preserved its peace*.

To one species of plunder I and many of my comrades must indeed plead guilty. The inhabitants of Washington, with becoming consideration, had provided an ample repast in every house for the conquering army, which was to return from Bladensburg with the British in chains; but, in its hurry to cross the Potomac, they swept past like its torrent, and left all the good things behind them. Then, indeed, there was a sad destruction of private property,—ducks, geese, hams, turkeys, buffalos' tongues, and buffalos' bumps, were devoured by wholesale; nor was Mr Maddison's health forgotten, in his own best claret, for being so good a fellow as to leave us such a capital supper. This fell to the share of those who were employed in destroying the Capitol, &c. For myself and men, we were most kindly treated by an honest barber, who came to me in great distress, saying, that he had provided an excellent supper, but that he had no one to eat it. He accordingly brought us out ham and fowls, and various other good things, and he gave the men a quantity of bread and very good cider; and what remuneration did this excellent citizen demand for his kindness? Why, that I would allow one of my soldiers to remain in his house, to *protect him* against a set of rascals who were prowling about the city taking advantage of its distress. At eight o'clock, in the morning of the 25th, I was ordered to return to



the bivouac of the army, two miles distant from Washington; and, previous to our marching off, the men under my command had not only the satisfaction to receive the thanks of the ever-to-be-lamented General Ross, for the manner they had preserved the peace of the city, but my friend the barber, and a great many other inhabitants of Washington, thanked the General and the soldiers, *for the protection they had afforded them from the marauding attacks of their own countrymen*. In adverting to what is said about the destruction of the great bridge across the Potomac, I have yet to learn, that a prudent *military measure* is contrary to the usages of war, particularly as the *Americans* themselves had *destroyed the two bridges* crossing the eastern branch.

I shall now, in corroboration of the facts which came under my own observation, quote one or two remarks from American publications. The *Columbian Centinel* says, "The British officers pay inviolable respect to private property, and no peaceable citizen is molested." A writer from Baltimore, under date of 27th August, 1814, says, "The enemy, I learn, treated the inhabitants of Washington well;" and what says Mr Gales, the mouth-piece of the Government, and the bitter enemy of the British? "When we remarked," says he, "in our paper of yesterday, that private property had, in general, been respected by the enemy, we spoke what we believed; greater respect was certainly paid to private property than has usually been exhibited by the enemy in his marauding parties; *no houses were half as much plundered by the enemy as by the knavish rogues about the town, who profited by the general distress.*" (*National Intelligencer*, 31st August.) I shall close my quotations with one from the George Town paper, 8th September:—"The list of plunder and destruction, copied from a vile and libellous print of that city (Washington) into several Federal papers, is a gross and abominable fabrication, *known to be such by every inhabitant*; most of the plunder was committed by rabble *of the place*, fostered among the citizens, and *subsequent to the departure* of the British troops; it is but justice to say, that the British army preserved moderation and discipline, with respect to private property, unexampled in the annals of war."

I have not, sir, the honour of a personal acquaintance with Mr Stuart, the author of "Three Years in North America." I trust he will forgive me for saying, that I think he has allowed himself to be imposed on by American mis-statements, in almost every instance, where the operations of the British army are described; and that he will believe, I publish the above in no spirit of hostility towards him, but simply, as far as in me lies, to put the character of my fellow-soldiers in a true light before the eyes of their countrymen, in justice to the memory of many brave men and valued friends, and in justice to that army of which I was a member for nine-and-twenty years, and with which I served in almost every quarter of the globe.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

NORMAN PRINGLE,  
Late Major 21st Royal Scots Fusileers.

## LETTER II.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EDINBURGH EVENING COURANT.

13th November, 1833.

SIR,—In addressing this letter to you, I trust it will be found that I am actuated by no motive but that which I declared in my letter published in your paper of the 31st ultimo, namely, the strong desire of doing justice, in every point of view, to the character of the British troops employed during the last American War. Mr Stuart says, in his letter to you, "I am therefore most culpable if even a single material error in this part of my work can be pointed out." Is it no material error to state that the British soldiery could not be restrained from plundering private property, when there is direct evidence, both British and American, to shew that such an accusation is not correct? Is it no material error to state that the British force at New Orleans was 12,000, and the American only 3000 or 4000, when the *reverse* is much nearer the truth, as official documents can shew? Is it no material error roundly to assert that the British never *reached the ditch*, when there are many living witnesses to testify that they did, and when even American authority can

be produced to shew that the British not only reached the ditch but got *into* their lines?

I hope Mr Stuart will have the kindness to excuse me if I repeat, what, in charity to him, I continue to think, that he has allowed himself to be imposed on by American mis-statements; and if any reliance is to be placed on official documents, I believe I shall be enabled to shew that Mr Stuart has had bad information respecting the British troops employed in the United States.

Mr Stuart, in his letter to the Editors of the *Courant and Caledonian Mercury*, says, that I have impugned his statement regarding the behaviour of the British troops at Washington. I shall now beg leave again to call in question the correctness of his information, come from what source it may, and, in military phrase, break fresh ground with him, and the field shall be New Orleans.

In vol. ii. page 253, of Mr Stuart's work, the author says, "The British are understood to have had between 10,000 and 12,000 men in this engagement, and the Americans between 3000 and 4000." Now, sir, as I happen to have an official return of every regiment of the British army employed on that expedition, I shall give the list: Mr Stuart can refer to the Horse Guards to know if I am correct. The list is of British infantry employed in the attack on the lines of New Orleans, on the morning of the 8th January, 1815:—4th foot, 747; 7th do. 750; 21st do. 800; 43d do. 820; 44th do. 427; 85th do. 298; 93d do. 775; 95th do. 276—making in all 4893 rank and file British; there remains to be added to this 200 seamen and 400 marines. For the amount of the American force, I shall leave the public to draw the inference from Mr Stuart's own words, merely stating, that I have now before me a very beautiful plan of the operations, and of the American lines before New Orleans, executed by Major Lacarriere Latour, principal engineer, 7th military district, U. S. army, which lines, to use the Major's own expression, "were a mile in length, and filled with men." In vol. ii. page 252, Mr Stuart says, "General Jackson placed his riflemen, each of whom had one, two, or three men behind him;" and, again, he says, "the fire of the American militia was most unintermitting—(no wonder)—the men in some places ranged six deep." Now, sir, taking for granted that Major Latour's plan is most perfectly correct, and that Mr Stuart's information is in this instance good, I shall split the difference with him, and allow the Americans to have stood four deep, and each file at one yard distance from the other, (good elbow room, as every soldier will allow,) there being 1760 yards in a mile, will make the American force, by Mr Stuart's own account, amount to 7040. That the Americans had many more men is my firm belief, as General Jackson was much too skilful an officer to throw up lines a mile long, unless he had masses of men to fill them; and I am sure I shall be borne out by my brother officers in saying, that such a torrent of fire (if I may so express it) as poured on the British troops that day along the whole extent of the line, was, perhaps, never witnessed, not even at St Sebastian. In page 253, Mr Stuart says, "the British never reached the ditch." I think I can easily disprove this assertion, and by American authority too. In consequence of an unfortunate mistake, the facines and ladders had never reached the head of our column. Major-General Gibbs, leading on the attack at the head of the 21st regiment, finding that the facines were not forthcoming, ordered the two leading companies of the 21st regiment to move forward in double quick time under Major Whitaker, the senior Major of the regiment, for the purpose of making a lodgment in the ditch. Almost immediately on giving this order, General Gibbs was mortally wounded, and, at the same instant, the enemy commencing a destructive fire, our column was absolutely mowed down. The smoke was so great that we could not see our two companies which had been sent in advance: but those brave men, under their gallant leader, pressed on, *got into the ditch*, made *steps with their bayonets* in the parapet, and *succeeded in getting into the American lines*, where, from want of support, they were made prisoners. There are many of the officers still alive who can vouch for this fact. Major Whitaker was killed in climbing up the parapet. At the first burst of the fire from the American lines, Colonel, now Sir William Paterson of the 21st, was badly wounded; Major Alexander James Ross was also most severely wounded, from the effects of which he never recovered, and died in Edinburgh some years after.

The command of the 21st regiment devolved on the junior field officer. From the effects of the tremendous fire, the advancing column was for a moment thrown into



confusion. The commanding officer of the regiment ordered a bugle to sound the advance, called to the men to follow him, which they did with cheers. They advanced to the ditch; some of the men were already *in it*; the present Lieutenant-General Sir John Keane, with that gallantry for which he is conspicuous, arrived, and, in the act of leading on and cheering the men, was badly wounded, and carried off the field; at the same instant, a staff officer came up, and ordered the officer commanding the 21st regiment to collect the remnant of his corps, and retreat to a wood in the rear. General Jackson in his despatch says, "Yet the columns of the enemy continued to advance with a firmness which reflects upon them the highest credit. Twice the column which approached my left was repulsed, and twice they formed again and renewed the *assault*." (Assault of what? why, of the ditch and parapet.) And now, sir, from my heart I thank Mr Stuart for giving me an opportunity of paying a tardy but just tribute to the memory of one of my earliest and most esteemed friends—to one of the bravest soldiers that ever drew a sword—I mean the late Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Rennie of the 21st Scots Fusileers, nephew of the late Sir David Baird. This officer had been wounded severely in the knee at the attack on Washington, still more severely on landing at the attack on Baltimore. Neither of these wounds were as yet healed, but nothing could prevent Rennie from performing his duty. Sir Edward Packenham had given Colonel Rennie a separate command, for the purpose of acting on the American right flank, and, as I am unwilling to make the public trust to the partial testimony of a friend, I shall forego the privilege, and recount the gallantry of Colonel Rennie in the words of his enemy, and I shall quote them from General Jackson's biographer, (Mr Eaton):—"Colonel Rennie, of the fusileers, was ordered to storm a redoubt on the American right. Rennie executed his orders with great bravery, and urging forward, arrived at the ditch, and reaching the works, and *passing the ditch*, Rennie, sword in hand, leaped on the wall, and calling to his troops, bade them follow him. He had scarcely spoken, when he fell by the fatal aim of one of our riflemen. Pressed by the impetuosity of superior numbers, who were *mounting the walls*, and *entering at the embrasures*, our troops had retired to the line in rear of the redoubt. To advance, or maintain the point gained, was equally impracticable for the enemy. The situation of these brave fellows may be easily conceived. They were nearly all killed or taken prisoners."

There is another circumstance connected with my gallant friend's death, which I cannot refrain from relating, as it gave me then, and does now give me, the greatest pleasure, to think that he was not only regretted by his friends, but that he, in his death, was honoured by his foes. The night previous to the action of the 8th of January, Rennie said to me, "I am always hit, and in case I should fall to-morrow, I beg you will use every endeavour to recover this ring, this brooch with some hair in it, and my watch, and if you survive, deliver them to my sister." After the attack on the lines of New Orleans had failed, a flag of truce was sent from Sir John Lambert to General Jackson. I wrote a few lines by the officer who carried it to the American general, mentioning my friendship for Colonel Rennie, and his request to me. On the return of the flag of truce, I received a polite message from General Jackson, saying that it gave him the greatest pleasure to comply with any request made by the friend of such a gallant soldier as Colonel Rennie—that he had taken care to protect his remains, and to order for them an honourable grave. The watch, ring, and brooch, were all returned to me.

Accustomed as we had been for years to oppose an honourable and a courteous enemy, it was a green spot in the wilderness of American campaigning to find one of the same stamp in the present President of the United States.

If, sir, I have expressed myself strongly, I have felt deeply. In that expedition I lost three of my earliest and most intimate friends, and there is a bond of affection between those who have stood by each other in many a well-fought field which men in ordinary life can hardly know. I have now to apologize to you and to the public for trespassing so long upon your time, but I hope you will both admit that it is a little too hard that men who are willing to suffer every privation, and to shed the last drop of their blood in the defence, or for the honour of their country, should have their "good name filched from them" by those who are (no disrespect to Mr Stuart) equally unwilling to allow and unable to appreciate their worth. I have the honour to be, sir, your obedient servant,

NORMAN PRINGLE,

## LETTER III.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EDINBURGH EVENING COURANT.

29th November, 1833.

SIR,—In addressing the following remarks to the public, I do not now come before it as merely wishing to defend the character of the British army from aspersions which have been cast upon it, and trust I have not infringed the rules of courtesy in not waiting *longer* for Mr Stuart's documents, but I wish to claim for that portion of the combined British forces employed in the expedition to New Orleans the merit they so well deserve. In the work already alluded to in letters published by me in the Edinburgh newspapers, where the author has thought it necessary to mention the failure of our attack on the lines of New Orleans, I was in hopes I might have found some description of other circumstances connected with that expedition, but I am sorry to say there is no page allotted to praise of the British seaman or British soldier in that work. Censure alone finds ample room. Why are the unparalleled exertions of our seamen and our soldiers withheld? Why is the gallant action fought by Captain Lockyer near the pass of the Rigolets with the enemy's gun-boats — why is the capture of the whole of the American flotilla by that officer, with the boats of the British fleet, withheld? Why is the action fought by our troops under Sir John Keane (under every disadvantage) withheld? After being exposed to the most severe weather in open boats for nearly *twenty-four hours*, the troops landed on a shore unknown to them, — they had lain down to rest in their bivouac, when, in the darkness of the night, they were suddenly attacked by 5000 Americans under General Jackson himself. (See Sir John Keane's despatch, December 28, 1814.) The British stood to their arms, repulsed the enemy at every point! and took up a position in advance of the one originally held! The action fought by the troops and seamen under Colonel (now General) Thornton, and which action was completely successful, on the right bank of the Mississippi — why is this not mentioned? I shall take the liberty of doing so in General Jackson's own words, given in his despatch of 9th January, 1815. The General says, "These" (meaning the British) "having landed, were *hardy enough* to advance against the works of General Morgan; and, what is strange and difficult to account for, at the very moment when their entire discomfiture was looked for, the Kentucky reinforcements, in whom so much reliance had been placed, ingloriously fled, drawing after them, by their example, the remainder of the forces, (about 1600,) and thus yielding to the enemy *that most formidable position*." Well might the late Sir Alexander Cochrane say, in his despatch to the Admiralty, dated January 18, 1815, "That the hardships undergone by the seamen and the troops had rarely been equalled." I will venture to assert, that in the whole annals of his own glorious service, that respected admiral never knew the combined energies of British seamen and British soldiers more severely put to the test. All were animated by the same enthusiasm. Officers and soldiers, admirals and seamen, were seen hauling on the same rope, and dragging at the same gun. It is not for British soldiers nor British sailors, any more than other mortals, to command success, but in this expedition they did deserve it.

I shall now speak of the retreat of our troops from the American shores. It will be naturally supposed that we were harassed to a degree by the enemy, — that he followed up his victory in the lines by driving us before him, and sweeping us from the face of the earth. No, General Jackson knew better than to leave his stronghold, — it was the prayer of every soldier that he would do so. The British lion had, indeed, been sorely stricken, but he was the lion still. Well has it been said by the eloquent author of the Peninsular War, "A British army may be gleaned, but it cannot be reaped." We remained until the 18th in our original position, and commenced our retreat on the evening of that day, — a retreat equally honourable to the general commanding, (Lieutenant-General Sir John Lambert,) and to the soldiers under him.

It is easy for gentlemen to sit at home and criticise the operations of an army or the movements of a fleet, — they little know the ordeal to be passed ere that victory



is won which may bring sorrow or rejoicing to their fireside. But the British public may rest assured that its seamen and its soldiers are ever the same. On the shores of the Mediterranean as on the banks of the Mississippi, one feeling alone animates them—the faithful discharge of their duty. “England expects every man to do his duty;” or the simple but characteristic appeal of the greatest Captain of ANY AGE—“What will they say in England?” these are signals British seamen and British soldiers will fly to answer. THESE ARE watch-words they will cheer to! Look on the deck of the Victory! look on the field of Corunna! or on the green turf, the humble death-bed of the humblest soldier—one sentiment pervades them all. Listen to the last sob of the dying man, and in it you will find a whispered hope that he has done his duty! It is also very easy for gentlemen, either in books or in House of Commons harangues, to send forth to the world systems hypothetically got up for the proper management of British soldiers, to tell us that this punishment is right and that wrong. I will take leave to tell those gentlemen, they do not, they cannot know, the true character of a British soldier. They must have served with him for years—they must have studied the dispositions of individuals of the three countries from whence the British ranks are recruited—they must have feasted with him to-day, and fasted with him to-morrow—they must have dwelt with him in palaces, and couched with him in hovels—they must have stretched their limbs with him on the sands of Egypt, or in the swamps of Louisiana—they must have witnessed his utter contempt of all danger and hardship, his perfect devotedness to the cause in which he is embarked—they must have shared with him the triumph of victory or the mortification of defeat! Then, and not till then, can I admit them to be proper judges of the character of a British soldier.

I shall conclude this communication, as I commenced my correspondence, by stating, that I have no motive but that of doing justice to my fellow-soldiers in every point of view. With whatever spirit of hostility I might have *fought* in 1815, in 1833 I *write* with none. As I have before stated, we ever found in General Jackson an honourable and a courteous enemy, and all our prisoners were treated with kindness and generosity. I shall venture again to assure the author of “Three Years in North America,” that he has been misled, and I would fain flatter myself that one day he will admit it. In the meantime our cause is before the public; to it I look for judgment, and with submission will await the verdict, whether for those who have made the charges, or for him who very humbly has offered the defence. I have the honour to be your obedient servant,

NORMAN PRINGLE,  
Late Major 21st Scots Fusileers.

#### LETTER IV.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EDINBURGH EVENING COURANT.

January 24, 1834.

SIR,—In answering portions of a pamphlet just published by Mr Stuart, purporting to be “A Refutation of Aspersions on Stuart’s Three Years in America,” I am afraid I shall be obliged to trouble you with more than one letter, but I shall make each as brief as circumstances will allow. In the first place, Mr Stuart says, that “if I had allowed his book to speak for itself, instead of giving my readers partial extracts from his narrative, it would have been hardly requisite for him to say a word in vindication of it.” He farther states, that “the quotations are obviously extracted with a view to serve a purpose.” Undoubtedly they were so, and the purpose was to contradict certain assertions made by Mr Stuart in his work, and which I have quoted in my letters already published; and why Mr Stuart blames me for not quoting more largely, I am really at a loss to understand. Mr Stuart’s book was before the public, and those who wished to read it had the opportunity of doing so for months before the publication of my letters. In that book I found assertions derogatory to the character of that part of the British army with which I acted in America, and these assertions I contradicted. In page 12 of the Pamphlet, Mr Stuart says “that I neither defend the proceedings at Washington, nor call in question the

propriety of his remarks—except in so far as concerns the private property destroyed by the soldiery, and the destruction of the bridge across the Potomac.” Now, I did not profess to do more. With regard to the merit or demerit of the expedition to Washington I have nothing to say. With regard to the burning and destroying public buildings, or what may have been considered public property, I have nothing to say. My sole object was to shew that Mr Stuart’s statement was incorrect when he declared that the British *soldiery* could not be *restrained from plundering* at Washington. In my letter to you of the 29th of October, I stated that I was in command of a small force sent to Washington for the purpose of protecting private property; that I remained in possession of the city from the evening of the 24th to the morning of the 25th, when I returned to the bivouac of the army, two miles from the city. I will again assert, that during my occupation of the city no private property was plundered by the soldiery. The army, with the exception of my small detachment, and those employed in the destruction of public buildings, was in bivouac two miles from the city, where it remained until the evening of the 25th. Page 14, “Mr Stuart says that my testimony comes no farther down than to eight o’clock of the morning of the 25th. It is, therefore, good for nothing. Every house in Washington might have been plundered between eight o’clock in the morning and the night of the 25th, when general Ross commenced retiring.” If the plunder of private property did commence after my leaving the city, it must have done so under the eye of General Ross himself, which I think Mr Stuart will hardly venture to affirm. From what I know of the character of General Ross, I am convinced had any soldier been found plundering, or in any way molesting an unoffending citizen, in twelve hours he would have been shot, and the whole army must have known it. I beg Mr Stuart clearly to understand, that my orders from General Ross were to let no *stragglers* from the army on any condition enter Washington; but I had nothing to do with detachments of men employed under the command of other officers in the destruction of public buildings, or what might have been considered public property. In page 13 of the Pamphlet, Mr Stuart says, “Major Pringle would have us to believe, that he was omnipresent in a city above four miles long, and of very considerable breadth.”

This sounds very well, until we find that the city contained, at that time, about 400 houses; and therefore I think it will be allowed, that 100 well disciplined British soldiers, under the immediate eye of their officers, could insure the safety of the inhabitants; and that they did do so, I will again prove by American testimony. The Columbian Centinel of the 31st of August says, “The British officers pay inviolable respect to private property, and no peaceable citizen is molested.” A writer from Baltimore, under the date of August 29th, says, “The enemy, I learn, treated the inhabitants; of Washington well.” The George Town paper of 8th September says, “The list of plunder and destruction, copied from a vile and libellous print of that city, (Washington,) into several Federal papers, is a gross and abominable falsification, known to be such by every inhabitant? Most of the plunder was committed by the rabble of the place fostered among the citizens. The British army, it is more than justice to say, preserved a moderation and discipline, with respect to private persons and property, unexampled in the annals of war.” Mr Stuart complains of my unfairness in not quoting Mr Gales’ whole paragraph. Mr Stuart is quite welcome to the full benefit of it all. Mr Gales says, “There were, however, several private buildings wantonly destroyed, and some of those persons who remained in the city were scandalously maltreated;” and what evidence is there here that the “knavish rogues” Mr Gales already mentions were not the perpetrators of these scandalous proceedings? as it is well known in such times every advantage is taken of the confusion and panic which reign. The latter paragraph of Mr Gales’ remarks, regarding Admiral Cockburn, is beneath notice, for which, see Pamphlet, page 18. With respect to the destruction of the bridge, I again repeat, that it was a prudent military measure. A very small British force had penetrated a considerable distance into an enemy’s country, they could not know from what quarter a large force might be brought against them.

In page 24 of the Pamphlet are these words, “Major Pringle would have the world to believe that the British on all occasions respected private property.” I have read my former letters over, and I cannot find any expression in them which warrants this remark—I cannot plead guilty to such an absurdity. Mr Stuart goes



on to say, "but it is hardly possible that he can be ignorant of all that was taking place around him." Mr Stuart then carries me off bodily from Washington to Alexandria on the Potomac, to Captain Gordon and the Sea-horse, to 15,000 barrels of flour! and 800 hogsheads of tobacco! What has that to do with Mr Stuart's assertion that the British soldiery could not be restrained from plunder at Washington. What impression does Mr Stuart suppose the world in general would have of an army whose soldiery could not be *restrained from plunder*? Why—that such an army had become an ungovernable rabble; that the men had shaken off the restraint of discipline, and set at nought the authority of their officers; that they had delivered themselves over to every species of enormity which an excited soldiery can commit. Does Mr Stuart mean to say, that this was the state of the army under General Ross, at Washington? He cannot believe it, the public *will* not believe it. Mr Stuart accuses me of only quoting those parts of documents which suit my purpose. What does he think of the following specimen of his own candour? In page 29 of the Pamphlet, he says, "Major Pringle cannot be ignorant that Sir Alexander Cochrane's celebrated communication to the American Government, announcing that it was his purpose to employ the force under his direction in 'destroying and laying waste such towns and districts upon the coast as may be found assailable,' became a subject of a proclamation by the President of America." Mr Stuart has quoted *part* of Sir Alexander Cochrane's letter. I shall give the *whole*. "From Vice-Admiral Cochrane to Mr Munroe.—Sir,—Having been called on by the Governor-General of the Canadas to aid him in carrying into effect measures of *retaliation* against the inhabitants of the United States, *for the wanton destruction* committed by their army in Upper Canada, it has become imperiously my duty, conformably with the nature of the Governor-General's application, to issue to the naval force, under my command, an order to lay waste such towns and districts upon the coast as may be found assailable. I had hoped that this contest would have terminated without my being obliged to resort to severities which are contrary to the usages of civilized warfare; and as it has been with extreme reluctance and concern that I have found myself compelled to adopt this system of devastation, I shall be equally gratified if the conduct of the executive of the United States will authorize my staying such proceedings, by making reparation to the *suffering inhabitants* of Upper Canada; thereby manifesting, that if the *destructive measures pursued by this army* were ever sanctioned, they will no longer be permitted by the Government. I have the honour," &c.

In Mr Stuart's book, page 87 of volume second, he mentions the following circumstance:—He says, "They (the Americans) were not at the time aware that it was to Sir George Cockburn they were indebted for the visit of the British to Washington; and it was upon the brave and amiable General Ross, who afterwards fell in the attack upon Baltimore, that they intended to retaliate for the devastation at Washington! It was resolved to send a fast sailing armed vessel to the coast of Ireland, to destroy Ross Trevor, the beautiful property belonging to General Ross. A party were to land in the night at the entrance of Carlingford Bay; they were to burn the house upon the mountain, and the village below. The peace put an end to this design, which was, however, seriously entertained." Indeed! Magnanimous resolution of this brave and generous nation! A set of men were to cross the Atlantic with all the *malice prepense* of premeditated marauders and incendiaries, for the purpose of attacking the property of an unoffending and defenceless woman, whose husband, by the time this design could have been put in execution, had fallen, in the hour of victory, and with his last breath had recommended "a young unprovided family to the protection of his king and country." See Colonel Brookes' despatch after the action before Baltimore. I trust that it is unnecessary for me to tell Mr Stuart that I do not quote this passage as receiving from him countenance or support in any way. I am quite sure that he is as incapable as any man alive of receiving it in any other light than that of unqualified detestation; but let us hear no more of these sticklers for the "usages of civilized warfare." I have the honour to be, sir, your obliged humble servant,

NORMAN PRINGLE,  
Late Major 21st Foot.

## LETTER V.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EDINBURGH EVENING COURANT.

*Edinburgh, 25th January, 1834.*

SIR,—Having now answered Mr Stuart's objections to my statement regarding Washington, I proceed to defend the accuracy of those I made respecting the attack on the lines of New Orleans. In page 32 of Mr Stuart's Pamphlet, he says, "It is not by the perusal of garbled and partial extracts from my work on the documentary evidence which supports it that my statements are to be judged of." I have already said, that in Mr Stuart's work I found statements regarding the British army serving in the United States which I did not think correct, and I quoted those passages for the purpose of bringing them before the public and refuting them. In page 48 of the Pamphlet, with reference to my list of the number of British troops engaged on the 8th of January, on the attack of the lines before New Orleans, are these words, "I confess that the first perusal of the very distinct testimony thus afforded by a gentleman who, upon the occasion to which his evidence relates, was himself acting as a field officer, startled me, and led me to think that I must have relied on defective information; but upon again consulting the official documents to which I had recourse in writing this first part of my work, I am glad to be able to prove that it is Major Pringle who is in error, and that my information was not only correct, but is supported by a mass of authorities." For the remainder, see Pamphlet, page 49. In my letter to you, sir, of the 13th November, 1833, I mention that I have an official return of every regiment employed on the expedition to New Orleans. I then stated that the list I gave is of *British infantry employed in the attack on the lines at New Orleans*, on the morning of the 8th of January. Then follows a list of the regiments employed in the attack, making 4893 rank and file British. There remains to be added to this 200 seamen and 400 marines. See my two letters. In page 50 of the Pamphlet, Mr Stuart says, "Nothing is better known to a military man than that the rank and file of a regiment, or of an army, comprehend merely the men armed with the bayonet, and that the whole of the officers, non-commissioned officers, the staff of the army, military as well as medical, the drum-major, drummers, pipers, &c. are not comprehended under that description. This is a serious objection to Major Pringle's detailed and conclusive information, as it is termed by you; but it is a slight objection, compared with those which are to follow." Sir, in giving a list of the *British infantry* employed on the attack of the lines before New Orleans, I, as a matter of course, designate them as rank and file, being, what I believe every military man will allow, the *fighting part* of a regiment. It may be a startling proposition to the author of "Three Years in North America" to hear an *old campaigner* declare that he does *not* consider the officers a fighting part of a regiment, and that any officer who goes into action determined to fight with his own proper hand, is not fit for the situation he holds; it is his duty to pay exclusive attention to his men, to see that they are so *held in hand*, as to be enabled promptly to obey any orders he may require to give, emanating from himself or from his superior officer. The duty of the serjeants is the same; and in my day they were armed with a halbert, which, against an enemy carrying muskets, could not be considered a very offensive weapon. It certainly would be new to me, to include medical men with their lancets, or musicians with their clarionets, in the list of fighting men. I have always understood it to be the duty of the one to carry off the wounded, and of the other to attend them. The only error I have committed is in placing the 85th regiment in the list of *British infantry* employed in the attack of the lines before New Orleans; this admirable corps was under the immediate command of their own most distinguished commanding officer, Colonel Thornton, on the other side of the Mississippi. I have, by including them in my list, made the amount of *British infantry* attacking the lines *greater*, by 298 rank and file, (the strength of the 85th,) than it ought to be.

I now proceed, sir, to give a list of the killed and wounded in every corps employed on both sides of the river on the 8th of January, to shew what regiments bore the brunt of the action. On that day—4th foot, 1 ensign, 2 serjeants, 39 rank and file killed: 1 lieutenant-colonel, 1 major, 5 captains, 11 lieutenants, 4 ensigns,



1 staff, 9 serjeants, 222 rank and file wounded; 1 lieutenant, 1 serjeant, 53 rank and file missing. *7th foot reserve*, 1 major, 1 captain, 1 serjeant, 38 rank and file killed; 2 captains, 2 lieutenants, 2 serjeants, 47 rank and file wounded. 21st foot—1 major, 1 captain, 1 lieutenant, 2 serjeants, 65 rank and file killed; 1 lieutenant-colonel, 1 major, 2 lieutenants, 6 serjeants, 1 drummer, 144 rank and file wounded; 2 captains, 7 lieutenants, 8 serjeants, 2 drummers, 217 rank and file missing, taken prisoners inside the American lines. *43d foot reserve*—2 serjeants, 1 drummer, 8 rank and file killed; 2 lieutenants, 3 serjeants, 3 drummers, 34 rank and file wounded; 1 captain, 5 rank and file missing. *44th foot*—1 lieutenant, 1 ensign, 1 serjeant, 32 rank and file killed; 1 captain, 5 lieutenants, 3 ensigns, 5 serjeants, 149 rank and file wounded; 1 lieutenant, 2 serjeants, 1 drummer, 76 rank and file missing. *85th foot, on the right bank of the river*—2 rank and file killed; 1 lieutenant-colonel, 1 lieutenant, 3 serjeants, 2 drummers, 34 rank and file wounded; 1 rank and file missing. *93d foot*—1 lieutenant-colonel, 2 captains, 2 serjeants, 58 rank and file killed; 4 captains, 5 lieutenants, 17 serjeants, 3 drummers, 348 rank and file wounded; 3 lieutenants, 2 serjeants, 1 drummer, 99 rank and file missing. *95th foot*—1 serjeant, 10 rank and file killed; 2 captains, 5 lieutenants, 5 serjeants, 89 rank and file wounded. Royal marines—2 rank and file killed; 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 1 serjeant, 12 rank and file wounded. Royal navy—2 seamen killed; 1 captain, 18 seamen wounded. 1st West India regiment—5 rank and file killed; 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 2 ensigns, 2 serjeants, 16 rank and file wounded; 1 rank and file missing. 5th West India regiment—1 serjeant wounded. Royal Artillery, on both sides—5 rank and file killed; 10 rank and file wounded. Royal engineers, sappers and miners—3 rank and file wounded. The 14th dragoons are not mentioned in the list, they having none either killed or wounded. That Sir John Lambert thanked the officers commanding the Royal Artillery, the 14th dragoons, the West India regiments, the sappers and miners, the seamen and marines,—that he thanked every individual belonging to all these corps, for the manner in which every duty, of whatever kind, had been performed by them; for “an assiduity” (I quote the General’s own words) “and perseverance, beyond all example, by all ranks, and the most hearty co-operation which existed between two services,” is well known to me. But I wish to ask the author of “Three Years in North America,” of what use would dragoons have been in an attack on lines situated in very wet ground, with a parapet of great height, and a deep ditch into the bargain?—of what use would artillery have been in an action where the troops were to march as fast as consisted with good order, to the attack of lines where they were immediately to come in close contact with their enemy?—Would it not have been an equal chance whether they destroyed friend or foe? The same holds good with respect to sappers and miners, as far as regards an attacking force against the lines of New Orleans. The list in my second letter is of *British infantry employed* in the attack of the lines of New Orleans; the above list of killed and wounded will shew that my statement as to the *attacking force* is correct. On both sides of the river the force ready for action was about 7300. Colonel Thornton had of that number 298 rank and file of the 85th regiment, 600 seamen and marines, the 5th West India regiment, which Mr Stuart says “he believes was the strongest that landed on the shores of Louisiana,” and 4 pieces of artillery; and if the whole British army had been on the right bank of the Mississippi, I could not have included it as being a part of the force which attacked the lines in front of New Orleans. I of course cannot prove by any well authenticated account the precise amount of the American force within the lines of New Orleans; and if I were to take the reports of Mr Ducros, and other American prisoners, I might give their statement that there were 13,000 or 14,000 troops within the city of New Orleans; but I do not wish to avail myself of testimony which might have been given with a view to intimidate, by exaggerating the force we had to encounter. I shall now endeavour to prove that General Jackson’s lines were about a mile long, and that they were filled with men. I have no hesitation in saying that I take the authority of Major Latour as the very best which can be had; he was the engineer officer who constructed the lines, and must have been perfectly acquainted with their extent. He must have known to a yard what it really was, and I have already said that General Jackson was much too skilful an officer to construct such lines unless he had men to fill them, as it is obvious to common sense that in as much as defences are extensive, so do

they become weak, if not guarded by troops within them. In page 59 of the pamphlet, Mr Stuart says, "Latour's calculation of the length of his line, may perhaps be explained by a statement of Levasseur, though, if *his explanation be correct*, it will not redound to the candour of Major Pringle, who, having accompanied the army, could not fail to know the real state of the case. Levasseur's information, however, is *probably correct*, for he mentions that the details were given to him on the spot, and that he was possessed of Latour's memoirs." "The position (he writes) chosen by the American General to wait for reinforcements, and to arrest the advance of so formidable an enemy, appeared to me judicious. He threw up intrenchments about five miles below the city, along an old canal, the left of which was lost in the depths of a swampy wood, whilst the right rested on the river. The total length of the line was about eight hundred toises, but as three hundred toises up the left were unassailable, the enemy was confined in his attack to a front of about five hundred toises, and obliged to advance in full view over a perfectly level plain." See Pamphlet, page 60, for the latter part of this paragraph, in which Mr Stuart mentions a toise to be two yards.

Now, sir, I shall proceed to shew that the swamp or wooded marsh towards the left of the American lines, and in front of them, was *not* impassable. Lieutenant-Colonel Rennie, of the 21st regiment, having himself reconnoitered the wood, made a report to General Gibbs, offering to conduct a body of troops through it. General Gibbs no sooner heard Colonel Rennie's report, than he accompanied him to the Commander of the forces, Sir E. Packenham. The consequence was, that, on the 28th of December, a demonstration of the whole army was ordered, and Colonel Rennie, in command of his own light company of the 21st regiment, was ordered to penetrate into the wood, as far as he could, and gain the enemy's left. He executed his orders in the most admirable manner, succeeded in getting the whole of his men through, and debouched from the wood upon the American left. According to the orders he had received, he kept up a brisk fire until he was desired to retire. Sir Edward Packenham, not thinking himself authorized to attack such strong lines with his very small force, withdrew his troops, determined to wait the arrival of the 7th and 43d regiments, which reached us on the 6th of January. On the 8th of January, Lieutenant-Colonel Jones, of the 4th regiment, was put in command of a body of troops, I believe about 400, to make his way through the wood and gain the enemy's left flank; in fact, to pursue the route, as nearly as possible, which Colonel Rennie had done on the 28th. Colonel Jones succeeded, as Colonel Rennie had done, in conducting his force through the swamp, debouched at the same spot, but found the line of defence in a very different condition from what it had been on the 28th. The enemy having now found, that what they had considered (previous to the demonstration) an *impassable morass*, was no hindrance to our troops; had, between the 28th of December and the 8th of January so fortified this, the left of their line, as to make it perhaps the most formidable of their whole position. Colonel Jones fell, mortally wounded, gallantly leading on his men, composed of detachments of the 4th, or King's Own, 21st regiment, and 95th rifles; but no effort of his troops could surmount the difficulties opposed to them of a high parapet, deep ditch, and skilful riflemen to defend them. I here subjoin the copy of a letter which I have received within these few days from Lieutenant-Colonel the honourable James Sinclair, at that time an officer in the 21st regiment, and who accompanied Colonel Rennie with the light company of the 21st regiment during the demonstration on the 28th of December, and also was attached to the 400 men under Colonel Jones of the 4th on the 8th of January:—

"Edinburgh, January 27, 1834.

"MY DEAR PRINGLE, — On the evening of the 27th of December, our ever to be lamented friend, Lieutenant-Colonel Rennie, in whose company I was, received orders to hold himself in readiness to proceed with his own company, and endeavour to make his way through the wood, and *turn the enemy's left*. Accordingly, on the morning of the 28th we proceeded, and entered the wood, and made our way with some difficulty, owing to the thickness of the wood and swampy ground. We kept still moving forward cautiously, until we heard two shots, and saw two of our advance fall, on which we dashed on, and found ourselves among some huts, which were occupied by the enemy. We continued to exchange for some time a pretty



hot fire. Colonel Rennie, perceiving that the firing of our guns on his left had ceased, (the signal for him to retire,) commenced his retreat slowly, bringing our wounded with us. We got back nearly the same way as we advanced, and returned with the main body to the camp. On the morning of the 8th of January, I was ordered with the light company of the 21st to join a brigade of between 400 or 500 men — the whole under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Jones. We were ordered to proceed in the same manner and to the same place we had got to before. After pushing through the wood, with great difficulty, we approached that part of the enemy's line we formerly found unprotected. A tremendous fire of grape and musketry was opened on us, which killed and wounded a great many men, and we found, with all our efforts, that on this part of the line it was impossible to make any impression. Jones was wounded towards the enemy's extreme left, when cheering on his men. We remained under fire a considerable time, and made several vain attempts to get over, when a staff officer came up, and ordered us to retire into the wood. From the moment we came out of the wood, in our advance, the whole of the American line from right to left seemed one sheet of fire, and it never ceased for an instant : as far as I could see, the men appeared to be in crowds. I have always understood that the American lines in front of New Orleans were towards a mile in length. Yours, with much regard,

(Signed)

"JAS. SINCLAIR,  
Major, H. P."

I have, sir, already taken notice, at page 59 of the Pamphlet, where Mr Stuart gives the information of Levasseur as being *probably* correct. We find in this quotation, that Levasseur says, "The length of this line was about eight hundred toises, but as three hundred toises of the left were unassailable, the enemy was confined in his attack to a front of about five hundred toises, and obliged to advance in full view over a perfectly level plain."

I have shewn, sir, by the above letter from an officer who accompanied not only Lieutenant-Colonel Rennie on the day of his reconnoissance, but formed, with the company to which he belonged, part of the force sent to attack the enemy's left on the morning of the 8th, that it was *not necessary* for the British "to confine their attack to a front of about five hundred toises, and be obliged to advance in full view over a perfectly level plain;" that I have proved that a considerable force, under Colonel Jones, did advance under cover of the wood, passed through it, and arrived at that part of the enemy's line which, *previous to the 28th December, was considered* by Levasseur and the *Americans as unassailable*, but which, on the 8th of January, was attacked by the force under Colonel Jones, and found to be full of men, and as strong as any other part of the position. I therefore say, that the American line of defence before New Orleans was, by Levasseur's own words, (Mr Stuart's authority,) eight hundred toises, or sixteen hundred yards, the three hundred toises *not* being unassailable, as found by the attack under Colonel Jones. Thus making, after all, Levasseur's measurement within 160 yards of Major Latour's, with this difference, that Mr Stuart says, page 59, that "Levasseur's information is *probably* correct."

With respect to the number of men composing the American force within the lines, I, of course, can have no certain mode of calculation ; but convinced, as I have always been, from every authority I could obtain, that the American lines were towards a mile long, and considering that General Jackson could not know in what quarter of his line he was to be attacked, it was necessary for him to be equally prepared at every point ; and as Mr Stuart has allowed in his book, page 292, that the Americans "ranged in some places six deep," I have a right to assume that, as the nature of the ground was nearly the same on which the lines were formed, so was it necessary to have them equally well lined with men ; and since Mr Stuart rejects my former calculation, I will abide by *his*. He says, "six deep in some places ;" they might have been eight in others ; it does not at all follow that the files are to melt away to suit a particular purpose, there they stand six deep ; and giving up even the odd hundred and sixty yards between Levasseur and Latour, six times sixteen hundred will come to more than my former calculation. I have always understood from officers present at that action, and who had gone through the Peninsular war, (therefore no bad judges,) that from the extent of the line, and the

tremendous fire kept up, the Americans must have had from eight to ten thousand men within it. I now, sir, come to that part of "Three Years in North America," where the author says, the British *never reached* the ditch. At page 258, are these words, "The British *never reached the ditch*;" and in page 61 of the Pamphlet, the author says, "It is obvious to every one who reads my narrative with attention, that it is only by a forced construction, that it can be held to maintain that the British in no part of the action reached the ditch." The *second paragraph*, detailing *Sir Edward Pakenham's attack*, contains no such impression. Is it in the third which relates to the continuation of the *attack by Generals Gibbs and Keane*, that the *assertion* is contained, that the British *did not* reach the ditch. Now, sir, any one acquainted with the details of the action before New Orleans, is aware, that our most gallant Commander-in-Chief lost his life in an *early* part of the action, and before it was almost possible that the men could have reached the ditch; and it was when he was in front of the men, cheering them on, that he lost his valuable life. Subsequent to his death, owing to the example and exertion of General Gibbs, the column *which he headed*, and *where he fell*, were brought up to the ditch, the two leading companies of the 21st regiment, under Major Whittaker got into the ditch, and were taken prisoners *inside* the lines. The individual who now addresses you, with the remainder of the 21st regiment, was close to the ditch, some of his men were in it, when General Sir John Keane came up encouraging the men, but almost instantly fell, severely wounded, at the same moment a staff officer arrived, and ordered the officer commanding the 21st regiment to retire with his men. See my second letter. I have thus shewn, sir, that the author of "Three Years in North America" has been misinformed even with respect to the period of the action at which the British *did* reach the ditch; but he has distinctly stated, in page 258, that the British *never* reached the ditch. He now says, indeed, that he never meant to deny that a few rash men did reach the ditch. Does Mr Stuart mean to say that two companies of the 21st regiment, with all the officers that belonged to them, were only a few rash men? General Jackson states, in his despatch, that he took 500 prisoners. It is notorious to every one, that the Americans were never on the outside of their lines. And were these prisoners then, in Mr Stuart's estimation, only a few rash men? I leave the public to judge of the word *never*. At page 60 of the pamphlet, Mr Stuart says, "I find myself charged with not having thought it necessary, in noticing the failure of the attack on the lines at New Orleans, to give any description of other incidents connected with the expedition." Mr Stuart is quite right; I ought not to have expected that he would take notice of the actions I mention, as he very probably never heard of them; *they* were successful, and it is not likely the Americans would dwell much on British victories. At page 43, Mr Stuart says, "If I had been inclined to accuse the British army of plundering, without ever considering the evidence on which such charges rested, I might have stated, that the Duke of Saxe Weimar expressly mentions, that the British carried off the cattle, and above 60 negroes from General Villaret. But as I did not find this fact stated in the American official accounts, I omitted all notice of it." I do not, sir, attempt to contradict this statement, it may be quite true or it may not. I certainly saw many negroes in our camp; but whether they were brought there by force, or whether they escaped from their masters, I cannot pretend to say. With regard to the bullocks, I can affirm they did not come my way; but from some passages I have read in "Three Years in North America," with respect to good dinners, if the author had been as long eating salt junk and hard biscuit as we had, I suspect he would have enjoyed a fresh beef steak, and not have been very particular in his inquiries from whence it came. At page 68, 69 of the pamphlet, Mr Stuart says, "Sir John Keane's action with General Jackson, to which Major Pringle particularly alludes, was fought during the night of the 22d December. Major Pringle, it will be seen, describes the British as suddenly attacked in the darkness of the night, by five thousand Americans, who were repulsed at every point, the British taking up a position in advance of the one originally held. Sir J. Keane's account of this action, is, however, very different." Now, Sir, I copy the following passages from Sir J. Keane's despatch:—"At about eight o'clock in the evening, when the men, much fatigued by the length of time they had been in the boats, were asleep in their bivouac, a heavy slanting fire of round and grape was opened upon them, by a large schooner, and two war vessels which had dropped



down the river from the town, and anchored abreast of our fires, &c. A most vigorous attack was then made on the advanced front and right flank piquets, the former of the 95th, under Captain Hatton, the latter, 85th, under Captain Schaw; these officers, and their respective piquets, conducted themselves with firmness, and checked the enemy for a considerable time, but renewing their attack with a *large force*, and pressing at these points, Colonel Thornton judged it necessary to move up the remainder of both corps. The 85th regiment was commanded by Brevet-Major Gibbons, whose conduct cannot be too much commended; on the approach of his regiment to the point of attack, the *enemy*, favoured by the darkness of the night, concealed themselves behind a high fence which separated the fields, and calling to the men as friends, under pretence of being part of our own force, offered to assist them in getting over, which was no sooner accomplished, than the 85th found itself in the midst of very superior numbers, who discovering themselves, called on the regiment immediately to surrender—the answer was an instantaneous attack. A more extraordinary conflict has perhaps never occurred, absolutely hand to hand with officers and men; it terminated in the repulse of the enemy, with the capture of 30 prisoners. A similar finesse was attempted with the 95th regiment, which met the same treatment. The enemy finding his reiterated attacks were repulsed by Colonel Thornton, at half past ten advanced a *large* column against our centre. Perceiving his intention, I directed Colonel Stovin to order Lieut.-Colonel Dale, with 130 men of the 93d regiment, who had just reached the camps, to move forward and use the bayonet, holding the 4th regiment in hand formed in line, as my last reserve. Colonel Dale endeavoured to execute his orders, but the crafty enemy would not meet him; seeing the steadiness of his *small* body, gave it a heavy fire, and quickly retired. Colonel Brooke, with four companies of the 21st regiment, fortunately appeared at that moment on our right flank, and sufficiently secured it from farther attack. The enemy now determined on making a last effort, and, collecting the whole of his force, formed an extensive line, and moved directly against the light brigade. At first, this line drove in all the advanced posts; but Colonel Thornton, whose noble exertions had guaranteed all former success, was at hand; he rallied his brave comrades round him, and *moving forward*, with a firm determination of charging, appalled the enemy, who, from the lesson he had received on the same ground in the early part of the evening, thought it prudent to retire, and did not *again* dare to advance. It was now twelve o'clock, and the firing ceased on both sides. *From the best information* I can obtain, the enemy's force amounted to 5000 men, and was commanded by General Jackson himself. Judging from the number left on the field, his loss must have been severe."

I may now ask in what my account of this action differs from that of Sir John Keane, except that I do not enter so minutely into detail, nor bestow the same commendation on the troops who fought it, and "*repulsed the enemy at every point.*"

I am far, sir, from wishing to detract from the merit the Americans deserve, for the manner they defended their country; and if the commendation of an individual, much behind General Jackson in experience and military rank, can be at all acceptable to him, I can have no hesitation in saying, that his position at New Orleans shewed consummate judgment, and the manner in which he was seconded in the defence of the lines there, reflects the highest credit on the troops under him. Willing as I am to allow what I have now written, I cannot abate one iota of the eulogium, however ungrateful to some ears, I formerly passed on the soldiers of my own country; nor will I admit, that any expression I made use of in that eulogium, will be cavilled at by those whose opinion I value. I think, sir, I may venture to say that I have shewn Mr Stuart has failed to prove that "*the British soldiery could not be restrained from plunder at Washington;*" that I have proved my account of the British force *employed in the attack on the lines* in front of New Orleans to be substantially correct; that I have proved my estimate of the length of the lines to be supported by the *best* authority,—the officer who constructed them; and that my inference deduced from that, with regard to the American numbers, is not an unfair one; and that I have proved, even by Mr Stuart's own admission, that "*the British did reach the ditch.*"

I shall now advert to page 42 of the pamphlet, where Mr Stuart writes these words: "Moreover, he (Major Pringle) has not scrupled to make it a public

complaint, 'that men who are willing to suffer every privation, and to shed the last drop of their blood in the defence, or for the honour, of their country, should have their good name filched from them by those who are equally unwilling to allow, and unable to appreciate, their worth.' These are heavy charges; affecting as they do, not only the credit of the work, but the character of the writer in point of veracity, intelligence, and good feeling." Sir, I never made such charges against Mr Stuart; I never questioned his "veracity, intelligence, and good feeling." I knew too well what was due to his feelings, and to my own character; and if Mr Stuart had done me the justice to quote the latter part of my letter, as it was written, this explanation would not have been necessary. Let him turn to his own Pamphlet, in which my letter is published, and he will find the passage thus expressed,—"should have their good name 'filched from them' by those who are (no disrespect to Mr Stuart) equally unwilling to allow, and unable to appreciate, their worth." It was my firm conviction that Mr Stuart had received his intelligence from persons not capable of giving him correct information on several points stated in his work. To those persons alone were my observations directed; and that no mistake might occur on this point, I inserted the words, "no disrespect to Mr Stuart," of which he has taken no notice.

Thus, sir, I have fully proved, in two letters, that my objections to certain passages in the work "*Three Years in North America*," (and which related to the operations of that part of the *British army* with which I served in the *United States*) were well founded, and that a pamphlet lately published by the author of "*Three Years in North America*," the materials for which he has taken nearly three months to collect, is *no refutation* at all. To characterize this pamphlet, I cannot do it in fewer words than by making use of the somewhat trite quotation, "*Parturiunt montes, nascitur ridiculus mus*." I have now, sir, trespassed long on your time, and that of the public. I trust the anxiety I have felt that the character of British soldiers should be put in a true light before the eyes of their fellow-countrymen, will plead my excuse, and though now no longer one of them, I must confess myself their very inadequate, but zealous advocate. — I have the honour to be, sir, your obliged humble servant,

NORMAN PRINGLE,  
Late Major 21st Regiment.

1882













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